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Virginia Department of Transportation Employee Newsletter

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Greg Whirley

Whirley is interim commissioner

He brings three decades of fiscal management to the job, along with a reputation for strong management and integrity

Gov. Mark Warner has appointed VDOT Inspector General Gregory A. Whirley to serve as VDOT's interim commissioner, succeeding Philip A. Shucet, whose resignation is effective July 1.

Whirley, a 17-year VDOT veteran and inspector general since September 2000, brings to his new position "experience and fiscal integrity," the governor said. His appointment "should signal to everyone that we remain committed to the successful reforms we have implemented at VDOT."

Whirley, a certified public accountant, has almost three decades of public and private experience in auditing, investigations and financial management. As inspector general he has coordinated VDOT's antitrust, internal and external audit functions to safeguard against waste, fraud and abuse.

"Greg has the leadership experience to insist on public accountability and individual responsibility within VDOT as we continue to improve VDOT's on-time and on-budget performance," Warner added.

Before becoming inspector general, Whirley was administrator of the department's Fiscal Division for 12 years. During that period he launched a new financial management system to provide tighter controls over spending and to gather reliable financial data.

A resident of Chesterfield County, Whirley is a 1974 alumnus of Virginia State University. He worked as an auditor for a private accounting firm in Washington, D.C., from 1974-77, controller for the National Mental Health Association Inc. from 1977-83, and as controller for the National Governors Association from 1983-88. He joined VDOT in April 1988.

"Governor Warner and the 2005 General Assembly pushed through innovative measures and significant new funding to strengthen the Commonwealth's system of transportation," Secretary of Transportation Pierce Homer said. "I am confident Greg and the VDOT team will continue to work hard on our efforts to implement these initiatives."

Whirley says 'stay the course'

Following his appointment as interim Commissioner, Greg Whirley said that his priority will be "to stay the course" set by the departing commissioner. "Commissioner Philip Shucet has laid a solid foundation based on proven business practices. Those practices will allow us to continue the progress we've already made," Whirley continued.

Whirley emphasized, "This is a time for focusing on the fundamentals and building and improving our present processes that will sustain our progress over the years."

Commissioner Shucet commented, "When Governor Warner charged me with reforming VDOT, I turned to Greg to help me shape the fiscal and management reforms. I am proud that Greg and the rest of the VDOT executive team have worked hard over the past three years to implement new and better ways of doing business."

Shucet 'raised the bar' for agency's performance

Announcing Philip Shucet's resignation as transportation commissioner, Gov. Mark Warner stated that the commissioner has "raised the bar on accountability in public service, and has served as a dynamic leader in an agency where Virginians demanded new thinking."

The governor noted that the commissioner, whose resignation is effective July 1, has "turned around years of financial mismanagement, dramatically improved the on-time and on-budget performance statistics, and worked hard to restore credibility to VDOT among other states and within Virginia."

Shucet came to the job as commissioner in April 2002. He will leave his post July 1 to spend more time with his family in Virginia Beach. In his resignation to the governor, Shucet wrote:

"I am pleased to tell you that the women and men of VDOT have met your challenge. My assignment is complete. It is simply too difficult for me to articulate my gratitude for the opportunity to be part of your team, and to work in one of the finest organizations -- public or private -- in the United States."

The governor cited these VDOT accomplishments under Commissioner Shucet's leadership:

- The Six-Year Improvement Program is financially viable, driven by official revenue estimates and realistic cost estimates.
- A cash-flow forecasting process is in place to make sure that the agency pays all of its bills in a timely fashion.
- On-time construction project completion has moved from 20 percent in FY 2001 to 74 percent through the third quarter of FY 2005.
- On-budget performance for construction projects has moved from 51 percent in FY 2001 to 81 percent. For maintenance projects, the stats are even better, at 77 percent on time, and 83 percent on budget.
- VDOT has increased its public accountability. This is especially seen in the development and implementation of a construction project "Dashboard," which indicates on the VDOT Web site whether projects are on time and within budget or falling behind their deadlines and busting their budgets.
- The 2005 Government Performance Project "Grading the States" report that assigned Virginia 'best managed state in the nation' status ranked Virginia as one of only four states meriting an "A" in the category of Infrastructure. The report specifically cited VDOT as a bright spot: "Historically, one of Virginia's few management trouble spots has been its Department of Transportation. But there's been positive change there as well."

"VDOT is on a sound and sustainable footing, and a strong, professional executive team is in place to lead the department into the future," said Commissioner Shucet. "This renewed VDOT will be a critical element in our collective efforts to begin solving the very real transportation problems that confront our Commonwealth."

Commissioner alerts Senate to funding crisis

Commissioner Philip Shucet recently reported to the Senate Finance Committee that by 2014, state construction funds will be insufficient to fully match federal funds. He also projected that by 2018 all state construction funds currently anticipated will be transferred to the Highway Maintenance and Operations Fund in order to maintain Virginia's roads.

Following the Commissioner's presentation, Sen. John Chichester announced that the Senate Finance Committee, in conjunction with the Senate Transportation Committee, has formed a Statewide Transportation Analysis and Recommendation Task Force (START) to develop an action plan to address the lag in funding.

Funding agreement signed for 'HOT' lanes

Commissioner Shucet has signed a comprehensive agreement with Fluor Enterprises Inc. and Transurban (USA) Inc. to improve the Capital Beltway (I-495) in Northern Virginia. The agreement is under the Public-Private Transportation Act, which allows the private sector to share in the financial risk of project construction and operations.

The project would add two high-occupancy toll (HOT) lanes in each direction on a 14-mile segment of the Capital Beltway, from north of the Springfield Interchange to north of the Dulles Toll Road. When fully built, construction of the four HOT lanes is estimated to cost \$900 million, which would be paid for primarily by revenues from the HOT lanes.

VDOT awards transportation planning grants

A new bike plan, a needs-assessment for people with disabilities and a plan for improving transit accessibility are among the projects awarded grants through a new pilot program funded by the General Assembly. VDOT is administering the program and has awarded more than \$1.4 million in transportation planning grants for 15 such projects.

Meanwhile, VDOT is awarding more than \$200,000 in rural transportation planning grants, ranging between \$12,000 and \$33,540 each, to eight planning district, or regional, commissions. Many grants will support studies that will lead to plans to improve safety and inter-modal connections.

Commissioner's Column

Keep moving forward

To the women and men of VDOT,

Back in April 2002, Governor Warner laid out clear goals for VDOT and specific marching orders for me. I told him we'd need about three years to accomplish his objectives. He wasn't looking for us to build a big construction program. Rather, he wanted VDOT to shine again in our citizens' eyes and in the eyes of the General Assembly. He wanted an organization that was financially sound; one that knew how to deliver what it promised on time and on budget. He wanted people across Virginia and the nation to see just how good this organization can be.

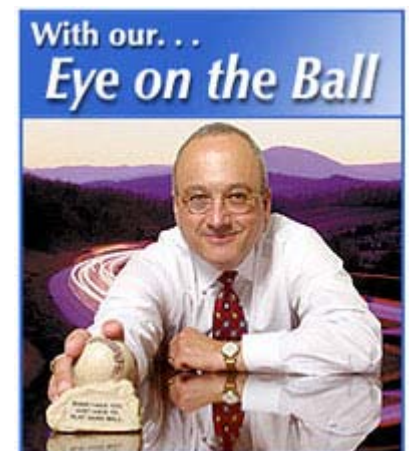
Every now and then -- for whatever reason -- even the best piece of silver gets a little tarnished. When that happens, you get out a polishing cloth, put in a little elbow grease, and shine it up again. That cloth has been in your hands. You applied the elbow grease -- a lot of it. You made things happen. And, now you're shining.

Those three years are behind us. Now, it's time for VDOT to keep moving forward, and time for me to head back home to my family in Virginia Beach.

Stay safe and keep your eye on the ball. We have work to do.

Philip

Philip Shucet



Last assignment was to co-chair VDOT Workers' Memorial

Askew: 'I always knew I wanted to build things'



Photo by Al Covey

Don R. Askew, deputy commissioner, aboard his Liberty 38 sailboat, Avemar, looks forward to his post-retirement cruise to the Bahamas.

Askew felt deeply about projects, and about the people building them

Shortly into his training, duty called, and so did the water. Askew joined the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey as an ensign on ships charting the Gulf Stream's changing paths between Cape Hatteras and Nova Scotia. That information was vital to U.S. submariners in the Cold War because they could hide under the Gulf Stream in maneuvers against the Soviets. The ships also did hydrographic surveys off the East Coast. He relished these missions.

Askew was back in the fold by 1968, finishing his training program. In August 1969, he remembers an assignment to pick up John Wray, then state maintenance engineer and later chief engineer, at 5 a.m. and drive to Amherst Residency to check out "some flooding and a few mud slides"--the first reports after Hurricane Camille. "Nobody knew what had happened," he says of the storm that dumped 36 inches of rain on Nelson County in 12 hours.

Reaching the Rockfish River Bridge on Route 29, they saw its approaches washed out, debris covering it, and two bodies being pulled from water beneath it. The immensity of the tragedy hit home. "I'll never forget the look in people's eyes, the shock--like they had been through hell." It would not be the last time Askew faced water's wrath against Virginia's infrastructure and citizens, but Camille acutely sharpened his sensitivity to people's tragedies.

That same month Askew became assistant resident engineer at Leesburg Residency, where he saw the beginning of the area's massive development. It prompted the widening of Route 7 from Fairfax to Leesburg. "The traffic was already there, it was so close to Washington, and it was a beautiful place to live," he could see, but he realized at the ribbon-cutting that the door to fast growth had been opened wide by that project.

In 1972, he went to Warrenton as resident engineer, where commuter traffic also surged--from 7,000 vehicles daily on Route 29 when he arrived to almost 50,000 today. He also faced more floods, which devastated roads around Sperryville and Criggersville in the mid-1980s. He cringes as he remembers a husband and wife who were washed away in the flooding. But again, the people of VDOT "came through to put things back together," Askew says, giving credit to others, a trademark of his character and career.

Construction, as well as maintenance, was central to his Warrenton mission. "We built lots of secondary roads," he remembers happily. Thinking about "building a road from point A to point B," continues to trigger joy. Arterial highways on routes 28, 17 and 211, as well as the Warrenton bypass were part of his history there. "Most interesting" among his construction projects was I-66 from Gainesville to Linden, involving a "multitude of contracts."

Don Askew remembers his first enchantment with engineering. He was riding the ferry out of Yorktown, looking up at construction of the first Coleman Bridge stretching over the York River, and he was captivated.

It was the late 1940s, but the scene in his mind is still vivid. His family was traveling from their home in Norfolk to his grandparents' country house in Mathews County. It was a trip that helped set his internal compass. From that era, Askew still hears the roar of motor graders and sees the hustle of workmen as they four-laned the old Virginia Beach Boulevard. Boyhood memories drew him toward his destiny.

VDOTer-in-Profile: Don Askew retires

"I was amazed at roads and bridges being built. I was fascinated by construction--seeing heavy equipment working on roads and cranes lifting steel beams onto bridges--and I always knew I wanted to build things," VDOT's deputy commissioner recalls on the eve of his retirement.

While construction scenes inspired him, a summer job hooked him on engineering and construction. While taking a Virginia Tech pre-engineering extension program in the early '60s at what is now Old Dominion University, he met an engineer who was helping build the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel, and the engineer offered Askew a job.

"It was the most exciting job I've ever had," Askew says. As an engineering aide on a hydraulic dredge, he directed the skipper where to drop sand for building up the bridge-tunnel islands. "I spent hours plotting cross-sections on the tunnel to see where the sand was to go," he remembers. Some weeks he was working on the dredge for 70 hours or more--a natural environment for Askew whose early life in Hampton Roads gave him a love for the water and its lore.

But Askew wanted to build on land as well as on the sea, and he was eager to engineer things on the soil of his native state. He not only got excited about engineering, he felt it at a deep level--both the projects and the people involved in them. Those feelings were to make lasting imprints on the department.

After transferring to Virginia Tech and finishing a civil engineering degree in 1964, Askew joined the Engineer Trainee Program. He was assigned to Norfolk Residency, which was building I-64 from Granby St. to Bowers Hill, and Askew was assigned as an inspector and then to a survey party. "I think I walked every foot of those 15 or so projects," he reminisces.

Giving credit to others became a trademark of his career

In 1987, he became maintenance engineer in Fredericksburg District. The first phone call the first day was to tell him that an inspector back in Warrenton, one of his best, Ronnie Pullen, had been hit and killed by an asphalt truck. Again, people and their fates had an impact on Askew. "It was so hard" to lose him, he remembers from the day he served as a pallbearer.

At Fredericksburg, his superintendents and foremen deliberated how best to train new employees to operate equipment. They came up with an idea for a district equipment operators' training center and brought it to reality. "It was a huge success, but it was not 'Askew's deal'," he insists. "It was people working together." That center became a prototype for the statewide VDOT Maintenance Training Academy at Thornburg. Employee safety was an ever-present concern in Askew's mind, especially because five employees lost their lives on the job while he was in the district. He encouraged the establishment of the center and the academy because, "I didn't want any more people to die or be injured out there."

He proposed a memorial to fallen workers

particularly proud of Tiger team members who volunteered to go, did tough duty cleaning up tragedies and wanted to stay on to help people in difficulty.

Shortly after Philip Shucet became commissioner in 2002, Askew proposed a second time a memorial to honor fallen highway workers. The commissioner agreed and said he wanted Askew to co-chair the project with Dennis Morrison, then Staunton District administrator. The two formed a committee, which Askew says, "put their heart and soul" into fundraising and planning for the memorial.

During that period, Askew served several temporary assignments in the Central Office, but by August 2003 he was back in Culpeper District getting ready to retire after a career of 39 years. That month, on a Sunday afternoon, he was working on his sailboat at the Dahlgren Marina when he got a call and an invitation from Commissioner Shucet: "I'd like you to come to work for me...as my deputy commissioner."

Askew was surprised. Nevertheless, he put away his retirement plans to accept the offer. He had planned to continue working on the VDOT Workers' Memorial in retirement, but in his new position he was able to continue to help lead the effort. Now, with the memorial beautifully finished on Afton Mountain, he says, "The highlight of my career was working with that committee to create something we can all be proud of and being part of an effort in which VDOT people and others gave of themselves to make this happen." Deflecting any credit for himself, he adds, "The memorial is a legacy we will all be proud of the rest of our lives."

But for Askew, the memorial will be not only a capstone on his career, it also will be a touchstone for all the feelings from all the years of working with the people on the roads. "I probably know 20 people on that monument," he adds thoughtfully. It's not likely that he will ever forget them.

Now Askew says it's retirement time. His wife, Lou, in their home in Summerduck in Fauquier County, agrees. So do his three grown daughters and two granddaughters.

He will have more time for them and for his other passion--sailing. He's working on two boats, a smaller one to sell and a larger one to sail to the Bahamas this fall. He has loved the waters in and around Virginia since his boyhood in Hampton Roads. His grandfather captained the "Old Smoky Joe," a coal-burning steamboat carrying passengers between Norfolk and Newport News, and Askew remembers holding its pilot's wheel. His uncle was master of a tug and occasionally thrilled young Askew by taking him aboard while the crew worked with vessels around the harbor.

Askew's office in Richmond presents a nautical motif with photos of naval vessels and boats he has sailed, figurines and plaques. But his future is now outside the office. He's on his way to establishing a new saying: "Old engineers never quit, they just sail away."

-- by **Chuck Armstrong**

Editor's Note: Don Askew retires July 1 after a career of 41 years.

Names in the News



Mary Lynn Tischer

Tischer leads multimodal planning office

Dr. Mary Lynn Tischer has been named director of the Commonwealth's Multimodal Transportation Planning Office. The office was created to facilitate implementation of VTrans2025, a blueprint for shaping Virginia's future statewide transportation system.

Tischer has an additional responsibility as federal intergovernmental transportation liaison for VDOT. In this role she leads the development of initiatives at the federal level regarding the Commonwealth's transportation system.

Tischer also serves as a special assistant to the Governor and Secretary for transportation reauthorization. She will continue in that role during the congressional effort to reauthorize the Transportation Equity Act of the 21st Century (TEA-21).

***Memorial is a touchstone
for his feelings for
VDOTers***



Stephen Brich

New divisions and administrators announced for systems operations

Two new divisions have been added under Chief of System Operations Connie Sorrell. A new Operations Management Division will be led by Stephen C. Brich, and a new Operations Planning Division will be led by Robert A. Hanson.

Brich moves from the positions of assistant division administrator in the Mobility Management's Safety Program and acting ITS program director. He will be responsible for all statewide programs relating to 24/7 operations, the regional smart traffic centers, traveler information services, congestion management and traffic signalization optimization. He joined VDOT in 1993 as a research scientist at the Virginia Transportation Research Council (VTRC).

Hanson has been instrumental in the development of the Asset Management System in the past two years. He is responsible in his new post for developing the Six-Year Operations and Maintenance Plan. That will include planning, budget development and financial oversight for the highway maintenance and operations (HMO) funds for system operations functions throughout VDOT.

Before joining the Asset Management Division, Hanson was a senior research scientist at the VTRC and a lead management analyst in the Management Services Division. He came to work at VDOT in 1994. Hanson was recently part of the asset management system team that won the Commissioner's Award for Excellence.



Rob Hanson

Residency administrator named for Warsaw

W. Carter White is the new residency administrator for Fredericksburg District's Warsaw Residency. White succeeds Joe Staton, who served as resident engineer until his retirement in January.

After graduating from Virginia Tech in 1989, White joined the department as an engineer trainee in the Richmond District. In 1992, he was promoted to the position of assistant resident engineer in the Warsaw Residency, the position held until his recent promotion.

One of the things White hopes to accomplish is "the development of our employees to their fullest potential so we can effectively and efficiently administer the transportation programs throughout the Northern Neck." White and

his wife, Lisa, have two children.



W. Carter White

Brewer is RA in Williamsburg

James W. "Jim" Brewer is the new residency administrator for Williamsburg Residency. Brewer succeeds David Steele, who has been named area construction engineer.

Brewer brings more than 41 years of VDOT experience to this new role. He has served as an inspector trainee, permit and subdivision specialist, transportation maintenance manager, and most recently as the assistant resident engineer.

During the past three years, Brewer has been instrumental in improving the response time to residency customers and seeking ways to improve service.



Jim Brewer

Vlacich heads maintenance in Northern Virginia

Branco Vlacich has joined VDOT as district's maintenance program administrator in the Northern Virginia District. He comes from the Maryland Transit Administration where he held the position of director of maintenance, material management and quality.

Vlacich has over 25 years of progressively responsible managerial experience related to maintenance management, leadership, and vehicle maintenance and repair. Vlacich will begin work June 10.

1906-2006

Celebrating 100 years of transportation excellence

The Virginia Department of Transportation is celebrating its centennial next year. In honor of that anniversary, the Bulletin will feature a series of stories recognizing our contributions to Virginia and to the nation in transportation excellence. This is the first of the series focusing on the decades leading up to 2006.

1906-1920

'Horseless carriage' pushed roads high on Virginia's agenda

At the beginning of this century, automobiles were appearing all over the Commonwealth.



Unfortunately, Virginia, much like her sister states, was not ready to accommodate the "horseless carriage." Citizens reached travel destinations via multiple modes of transportation, including railroads, horses, horse-drawn vehicles, stagecoaches, steamboats, and of course, automobiles.

Recognizing the need for a central road and transportation organization, the state legislature created the first State Highway Commission on March 6, 1906.

By law, the commission consisted of three university professors of civil engineering and the commissioner. The commission's organization would change many times in years to come.

Captain Philip St. Julien Wilson was appointed the first commissioner and set up his office in two rooms in the State Capitol Building. His staff included an

assistant, a bridge engineer, a draftsman, a clerk and a stenographer.

In the early years, the commission concentrated on advising counties on the improvement and care of their existing roads. Although some road improvements were made throughout the state by use of convict camps, state aid and bond issue funds, there was no well-planned highway system, and roads were often described as "starting nowhere" and "ending nowhere." The state's only improved road of any appreciable length was the Valley Pike (now Route 11), a toll road that ran from the West Virginia line north of Winchester to Staunton.

The first state highway project began in August 1906 in Washington County between Meadow View and Graham's Bridge -- a 5.11-mile section of road. When the project was 60 percent complete, managers said it cost about \$1,600 per mile.

Promotion of better roads grew more vigorous in the second decade of the century, and the concept of a national system of highways began to emerge. The American Road Builders Association (formed in 1902), the American Association of State Highway Officials (AASHO, organized in 1914), and other groups pushed for federal aid to highways.



*Commissioner Wilson,
1906-1913*

Virginian leads in national roads effort

George P. Coleman was commissioner of highways from 1913-1922, and he took a national lead in organizing the federal highway system. He was also chief organizer of AASHO (later AASHTO). Henry G. Shirley (who would later become the agency's third commissioner) was elected as the group's first president, and Coleman was the second president.

In July 1916, Congress passed the Federal Aid Road Act, which provided federal funds to match state funds on approved projects. The act also provided that each state would have a highway agency with engineering professionals to carry out the federal aid projects. That same year, Virginia received its first allotment of federal aid funds - approximately \$100,000. The first road improved with federal funds was what is now Route 19 between Hansonville and the Washington-Russell county line at Moccasin Gap.

With the advent of World War I, men and materials were siphoned away from state roadwork. About 80 percent of the department's engineers entered the country's service.

C.S. Mullen, future chief engineer, wrote about this time in a commemorative edition of the Virginia Highway Bulletin for the agency's 50th anniversary: "During World War I, instructions were issued from the Richmond office, advising field engineers to cover their work on foot if no other means of transportation was available. If night overtook them, they were to stop at a farmhouse, and resume their journey on foot in the morning."

Also during World War I, the trucking industry was in its infancy. When a truck was driven between Detroit and Washington, D.C., it made headlines in the daily newspapers.

In 1918, Virginia passed the State Highway Act, establishing a state highway system of 4,002 miles, which would be the state's responsibility to build and maintain.

In a special session in 1919, the legislature made a major change in the commission's organization. It was expanded from four to five members, representing the geographical divisions of the state to be appointed by the governor with the approval of the state Senate. The legislature also said future members were to be Virginians chosen from each region, with one of the five serving as chairman. The commissioner, who was chosen by the governor, would not be part of the commission.



*Commissioner Coleman
1913-1922*

A new approach to training, educating

VDOT University Virtual Campus launched



The VDOT University, under development for months, is now officially established. Its inception supports a new approach VDOT is taking to train, develop and educate its workforce, one that will sharpen the agency's focus on performance and accountability. The system that makes the VDOT University a reality is the VDOT University Virtual Campus, which was launched May 26.

What is the Virtual Campus? The Virtual Campus is a Web-based learning management system that will dramatically change our ability to plan and manage training, development and education at VDOT. Its implementation will provide a one-stop resource for online and classroom training, personal development plans, learning resources and more. For the first time, VDOT employees will have the capability to manage their learning needs.

With this system, employees will be able to:

- Access, view and retrieve their training records;
- Add learning events to their transcripts;
- Search for all VDOT training and development offerings, statewide, from one source;
- Sign up for instructor-led courses online;
- Take courses online using the e-learning tool;
- Identify training and development opportunities to enhance competencies; and
- Collaborate with team members through shared team rooms on topics related to training and development.

The system's functions and features help managers and trainers:

- Automatically assign, manage and track mandatory training requirements;
- Target specific audiences for specific training; and
- Employ a Web-based interface allowing management 24-hour access from any PC on the Internet.

And that's not all. Supervisors and managers will be able to view and track the training and development progress of their employees. In the near future, Virtual Campus will offer assessment tools that give employees a targeted direction for identifying developmental opportunities for their current and future career roles.

How will the VDOT University Virtual Campus function? This Web-based system will have four components called "buildings."

The Administration Building is the location for training-related administrative functions. This building provides access to employee records, transcripts and instructor rosters and offers maps of VDOT training sites throughout the state.

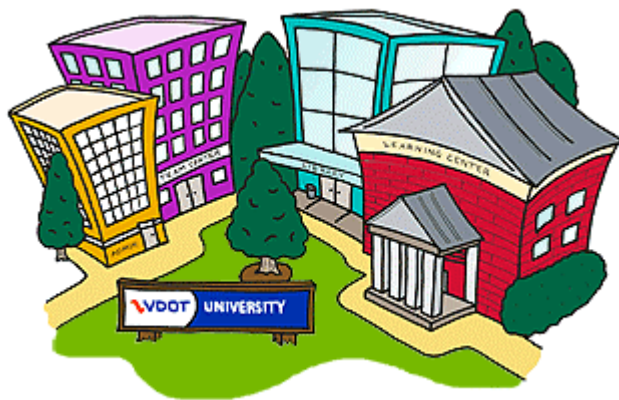
The Learning Center is the structure that contains all course information and provides employee access. It includes a course catalogue, schedule of courses, employee enrollment capabilities and access to online courses.

The Library is the resident repository for book catalogues, references and research materials, and links to learning resources.

Team Rooms are places to address training and development topics. In a Team Room, users can share documents, plan and schedule events and communicate in a chat room.

For VDOT staff without access, or with limited access, to computers and online resources, plans are moving forward to ensure that these employees' training and development needs are satisfied. District trainers will provide briefings on the new system as well as training sessions to learn how to use it.

In addition to VDOT, seven other Virginia state agencies are implementing this on-line tool.



Yes, we do have 40-year pavements!

VTRC study establishes that certain pavements are "high performers"

Researchers at the Virginia Transportation Research Council (VTRC) recently have confirmed something civil engineers have yearned to see for years--highway pavements with a life span of 40 years.

Hoping to find a premium pavement design lasting four decades, the researchers evaluated 18 pavement sections on high-traffic highways in Virginia, interstate or primary roads carrying at least 1,000 trucks per day among other vehicles.

They found that eight of the sections evaluated were "genuine high performers, supplying long structural lives at high levels of service," according to Kevin McGhee, VTRC research scientist. Three of the eight had 40 years or more of service. The other five had 30 years or more of use.

"This study verifies for the first time that we do have 40-year pavements in Virginia--and generally speaking, the investigated pavements exhibit very low structural

distresses and very good ride quality and safety," McGhee continues. Field testing included use of a falling-weight deflectometer, which assesses the structural capacity of a pavement, as well as ground-penetrating radar to discover abnormalities inside and underneath the pavements. Coring and other tests were also performed in the field and laboratory.

What does the study reveal about highway designs and their longevity?

"It validates a lot of intuition that pavement engineers have developed over the years by demonstrating the importance of a substantial base or foundation," explains McGhee. Substantial bases observed in the study included a thick layer of crushed stone (10-20 inches), a thinner layer of cement-treated crushed stone, and even concrete slabs. Trenton Clark, VDOT asphalt engineer, added, "To have long-lasting pavements, we must make the investment in the pavement's foundation at the time of construction. By paying for higher-quality materials, we minimize the risk of having to repair those materials in the future. It's cheaper to fix the surface than it is to fix the foundation."



Kevin McGhee



Boring for pavement layer samples

The 18 pavements studied can be placed in one of three pavement categories-flexible (made of about a foot of asphalt), composite (combining an asphalt surface with Portland cement concrete), and rigid (employing full-depth cement concrete of about 9 to 11 inches).

The major structural elements of five of the flexible pavements and three of the composite pavements were found to have given 30-plus years of service, and pavements in all three categories performed well. However, the designation of a highway section as a "40-year pavement" does not mean it has had no maintenance--all have been maintained, and several have received structural enhancements. The objective is to establish a truly enduring pavement, one that needs resurfacing on a 12- to 18-year cycle but does not require reconstruction down to the base or foundation of the highway.

Now the researchers would like to evaluate other categories of pavements that perform at lower levels in order to determine the causes of their poorer performance. Then performance could be modeled on each category of pavement and predictions of their performance could be made. The outcome would be more cost-effective highways requiring less traffic-slowing maintenance.

Editor's note: The VTRC has chosen to retain the name Virginia Transportation Research Council. The name was changed for a brief period to Virginia Transportation Research Center.

Prototype roadside management program derived from Lynchburg Expressway Appearance Fund

In 1994, several Lynchburg residents looked at the entranceway to their city--the Route 29 bypass--and said, "We're not making a good first impression." Others were more blunt. They termed the bypass, also called the Lynchburg Expressway, "an eyesore."



VDOT had recently rehabilitated the bypass, but state code prohibited spending on landscaping or other cosmetics along such roadways.

Consequently, city leaders banded together under the Keep Lynchburg Beautiful Commission to form the Lynchburg Expressway Appearance Fund (LEAF). With the leadership of volunteer chairman Smokie

Watts, they solicited funds from corporate and individual sponsors for a landscaping project along the expressway, offering plaques, letters and watches in appreciation. But the effort failed. Another idea -- recognizing sponsors with acknowledgement signs on the expressway -- ignited the enthusiasm of potential contributors. Donations of cash, pledges and materials flowed in. Nearly \$1.5 million has been collected.

After gaining permission from VDOT to proceed with landscape improvements, LEAF supporters employed a landscape designer, adopted the firm's designs and went to work. The result is 4.5 miles of improved roadsides along routes 501 and 29. The improvements include 125 acres of mowed turf, 40 acres of meadows, and 10 acres of landscaping with 76 plant beds. In addition, the city of Lynchburg has committed to maintaining all the improvements, at a cost of about \$325,000 annually.

"For the first time, businesses, local organizations and citizens can contribute to the costs of improving VDOT rights of way in their locality. Meanwhile, VDOT is relieved of responsibilities for planting, fertilizing, watering, pruning, mowing and trash pickup," says Lynchburg District Administrator Tom Ramey.

Annual costs to maintain a mile of highway roadside range from \$2,000 to \$3,850, according to Jake Porter, VDOT's roadside operations program manager. VDOT maintains 57,000 miles of roadside with 300,000 acres of turf. Recognizing that citizen initiatives could save VDOT a bundle of maintenance money, Sen. Charles Hawkins of Lynchburg sponsored legislation to authorize local roadside improvement projects on rights of way across Virginia. The act, called the Comprehensive Roadside Management Program (§33.1-223.2:9 in the Virginia state code), passed last year. Citizens can make comments on proposed regulations for the program through July 15. A public hearing was held May 27.

Savings for VDOT and enhancements for the city were not the only benefits derived from Lynchburg's initiative, according to Porter. Community pride grew and the local economy ticked upward as real estate values increased and out-of-town businesses considering Lynchburg were favorably impressed by its entrances to the city. Tourism also got a boost from the new look.

VDOT's Asset Management Division has been conducting workshops for localities interested in improving their roadsides since October of 2004. Richmond, Roanoke, Blacksburg, Prince William and Dinwiddie counties are among localities evaluating the program.

The division has led and coordinated the writing of proposed regulations for the program in conjunction with a number of statewide organizations. The regulations prohibit state involvement in either financing or planning of local initiatives; however, plans and work on roadsides must comply with VDOT specifications, local ordinances and state and federal laws. Also, public hearings about any proposed local program must be held and the local government must endorse it. Responsibility for maintaining the roadsides improved under the program is laid directly on the local government -- in perpetuity.

According to Porter, "This program should result in a net reduction in costs to us. It's the truest example of a public-private partnership. The initiatives and funding come from private sources, and local communities are the primary beneficiaries. VDOT certainly becomes a secondary beneficiary as its roadsides are improved and managed by locally led efforts."

Best Practices

All in the Family

Bristol District

Henry France hangs up his helmet June 1--after a career with the department beginning in 1953. France, a transportation operations manager I, has been with the Scott County bridge crew since 1973 and has worked on bridges as long as anyone can recall. He retires with an impeccable safety record: more than 50 years without any personal injuries or equipment accidents. He is shown here at a retirement celebration at the Gate City area shop. Congratulations Mr. France! And thank you for your sterling service to the department and the Commonwealth!

Central Office

Location and Design Division: Ron Chwojdak, assistant state L&D engineer, has been named acting director of the new Project Management Office in Central Office. Also, Chwojdak recently was presented the Amelia County Fire Department's "Most Valuable Firefighter" award by Sen. George Allen.

Culpeper District

Charlottesville Residency: Yolanda Mosley is the new residency business administrator. She has worked in the residency since 1986. Jeffrey Garr has been promoted from supervisor to superintendent at Stanardsville AHQ.

Culpeper Residency: Maintenance supervisor Michael Clatterbuck has been promoted to superintendent at Gordonsville AHQ.

District Office: Brent Sprinkel has been named preliminary engineering manager. Formerly the district structure and bridge engineer, Sprinkel is a 32-year VDOT veteran.

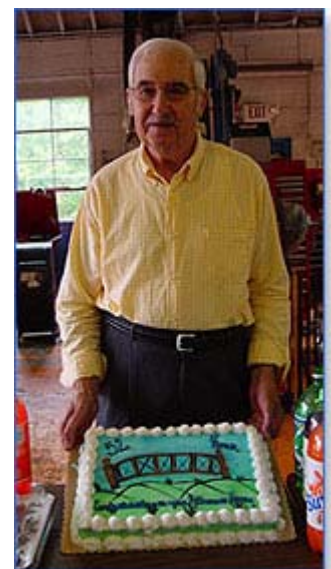
Fredericksburg District

District Office: Billy Seargeant has been named district facilities manager. He has extensive knowledge in facilities construction and project management.

Fredericksburg Residency: Congratulations to Denise Carr on her recent promotion to residency contract administrator.

Warsaw Residency: Carter White has been promoted to residency administrator from assistant residency administrator (read more about him in "Names in the News"). Wayne Mullins, construction inspector sr., has been promoted to project engineer. He has more than 20 years construction experience.

Saluda Residency: Preston Bristow has been promoted from maintenance crew member at Mathews AHQ to maintenance supervisor at Shackleford AHQ.



Henry France

Hampton Roads District

District Office: Congratulations to Ben Bryant Jr., Hampton Roads District Employee of the Year. Bryant is equipment service and repair manager for the Equipment Section working at the Pine Chapel shop. His coworkers wrote in their nomination of him: "Ben consistently performs in an outstanding manner to support VDOT's mission and to deliver extraordinary customer service. He is a hard worker and all around nice person who practices our VDOT Values every day. He is a pleasure to work with."

Eric Stringfield has been promoted to district planning engineer. He was previously a transportation manager I in the planning section. Cheryl Jenkins, administrative specialist II, recently received a bachelor's degree in business from Hampton University, where she qualified for the university's and the national dean's lists. Chris Terry, P.E., has been promoted to transportation engineer senior in the Bridge Section where he will lead the designing of plans for new bridges and those needing rehabilitation.

Tiffany Elliott has had a promotion and a wedding. She recently was named Hampton Roads District public affairs manager, after serving as acting public affairs manager. In addition, on May 28, she married John Michael Erbach in a ceremony at Dillsburg, Pa. Congratulations and best wishes, Tiffany!

Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel: Stepfonza Allen, acting electrical maintenance supervisor, has obtained his master electricians license.

Waverly Residency: C. Rossie Carroll is the new residency maintenance operations manager. Rossie was most recently superintendent at the Whaleyville AHQ in the Suffolk Residency. Rossie has more to celebrate than just his promotion: He and his wife, Amy, recently celebrated the birth of their second child, Christopher Collin. Earl Newby Sr. has been promoted to maintenance supervisor at the Surry AHQ after serving as a transportation operator.

Bruce Bain moved up from team member at Seaford AHQ to supervisor there. The residency is delighted to welcome back construction inspector James A. Jones who recently returned from extended active duty in Iraq. He was with the Army National Guard, 276th Engineer Battalion based out of West Point.

Lynchburg District

Amherst Residency: Larry Nash has been promoted to residency construction project manager.

District Office: Garry Tanner has been promoted to district quality manager. John Carwile, from Chatham Residency, has been named design project coordinator in the Location and Design Section, and Renard Yeatts has been promoted to engineer I in L&D.

Evelyn Bruffy, procurement officer, has obtained an accredited purchasing practitioner (APP) designation from the Institute for Supply Management (ISM) after passing a rigorous examination to back up a combination of education and experience. Bruffy also is a certified Virginia contracting officer (VCO) and certified professional public buyer (CPPB). Joan Johnson, district procurement manager, has earned a certified purchasing manager credentials from ISM. According to ISM, "by having the CPM designation, individuals join a select professional group widely acknowledged by peers and management alike to be among the best prepared for today's competitive world of purchasing and supply management." Johnson also holds VCO, CPPB and APP credentials.

Dillwyn Residency: Walter D. Blackwell has been selected construction project manager (formerly project engineer) for the residency. Blackwell, who began his VDOT career as a timekeeper in 1973, brings to the position a wealth of experience on both the maintenance and construction sides.

Staunton District

Verona Residency: Michael L. Surratt has been promoted from engineering technician II to III.

Humor--It's always close to the centerline (the heart) of VDOT

'Can I just sneak away from here?'



Photo by Trevor Wrayton

Gary Jennings

Gary Jennings, assistant resident engineer at Sandston, doesn't like to think about it, but can't forget about it--the night he saw his snow plowing operation turn into a carnival of mishaps. It was back in the 1980s when Gary was an inspector in Leesburg Residency and he was driving a truck pushing snow.

Rolling slowly down a steep hill into a cul-de-sac, he hit a patch of black ice. It sent his truck skidding down the hill into the side of a pickup truck parked on the street in front of a house, knocking the truck into the front yard. "I couldn't have hit it any better if it had had an 'x' painted on it. My first thought was, "Can I just sneak away from here?"

Not a chance because just then all the neighborhood lights popped on. Gary trudged to the front door of the pickup's owner, knocked, and said, "We owe you a truck. Can I use your phone?" (There were no cell phones and sometimes the two-way radios did not transmit or receive all the way to the residency.) The man of the house was "kinda reasonable, for that hour of the morning" (it was 2 a.m.).

Gary told the dispatcher, "Send a state trooper out and tell him, 'Don't come down this hill.'" Shortly thereafter, the trooper rolled over the hilltop and immediately hit a fast track that slammed into the back of Gary's snow-plow truck, demolishing the police cruiser.

Another phone call for another trooper. But this time Gary and the first trooper lit flares at the top of the hill to stop the next trooper. Then the assistant resident

engineer called to say he was trying to find them, and he was lost. The property owner said, "Isn't that the guy in charge? Doesn't he know how to get here?"

When the assistant resident engineer arrived, he stopped at the top of the hill, put on golf shoes and high-stepped ballet-like down the hill to the scene, which was becoming more bizarre all the time. Gary's happiest thought--"I'm asleep and this is a nightmare"--was only a temporary refuge from reality.

There's a next chapter in Gary's maintenance operations in Northern Virginia. He was hauling a load of salt during another storm. He came to a double-reverse curve, again at 2 a.m., slid into a ditch and rolled the truck into a beautifully manicured lawn. A tandem truckload of salt poured onto the object of the proprietor's tender loving care. As bold and fearless as Inspector Clouseau in the "Pink Panther," Gary knocked on the front door. When it opened, he said "I guess we'll be working on your front yard this spring."

Retirements

WILLIE J. ALLEN, Transportation Operator II, Fairfax Residency, 28 years of service.

PAUL L. BLANCHARD, Architect/Engineer I, Suffolk District Office, 44 years of service.

DAVID W. CURTIS, Engineering Technician III, Northern Virginia District Office, 31 years of service.

PAMELA B. CURTIS, Engineering Technician III, Northern Virginia District Office, 37 years of service.

JESSE W. DESHAZO, Transportation Operator II, Rocky Mount Residency, 20 years of service.

HERBERT A. DODRILL, Equipmt Serv Repair Tech I, Richmond District Office, 6 years of service.

BARBARA J. DONALSON, Admin and Office Spec II, Powhite Parkway Ext. Toll Road, 25 years of service.

HARRY F. EDGE JR, Transportation Operator II, Edinburg Residency, 19 years of service.

HERMER H. FAIRCLOTH, Trades Technician III, Culpeper District Office, 37 years of service.

GEORGE F. FERRELL, Gen Admin Manager II, Salem District Office, 16 years of service.

EVERETT N. HARRIS JR, Transportation Operator II, Amelia Hill Residency, 16 years of service.

T. L. HEATH, Trades Technician III, Bristol District Office, 38 years of service.

LEE F. KNIGHT, Transportation Operator II, Luray Residency, 28 years of service.

HARMON H. LENTZ, Transportation Operator II, Rocky Mount Residency, 26 years of service.

BRENDA G. MANNING, Environmental Specialist I, Salem District Office, 39 years of service.

WILMER O. MANNING, Arch/Engring Mgr I, Salem Residency, 42 years of service.

O. D. MCMURRAY, Transport Opertns Manager I, Bristol District Office, 40 years of service.

GILES L. NEWSOME, Admin and Office Spec III, Suffolk District Office, 21 years of service.

CHARLES E. NOEL, Architect/Engineer I, Location & Design, 40 years of service.

WILLIAM S. PARKER, Engineering Technician III, Bedford Residency, 32 years of service.

ERIK J. PETERSON, Engineering Technician III, Suffolk District Office, 32 years of service.

ALLEN W. REYNOLDS, Architect/Engineer I, Scheduling & Contract Division, 11 years of service.

JACK L. ROWE, Engineering Technician III, Jonesville Residency, 24 years of service.

ROY R. SPRAGGINS, Transportation Operator II, South Hill Residency, 39 years of service.

W. N. SUTHERLAND, Transportation Operator II, Wytheville Residency, 40 years of service.

DOUGLAS N. TERRY, Transportation Operator II, Rocky Mount Residency, 18 years of service.

CLARA J. THOMAS, Engineering Technician III, Bristol District Office, 40 years of service.

E. B. UMBERGER III, Equipmt Serv Repair Tech I, Salem District Office, 36 years of service.

RONNIE W. UNDERWOOD, Equipmt Serv Repair Tech I, Salem District Office, 31 years of service.

GRAHAM S. WEBB JR, Trades Technician III, Richmond District Office, 17 years of service.

Obituaries

Carl L. Ailer, 78, landscape specialist, Staunton District, died March 31; retired in 1990 with 43 years of service.

Clayton H. Bond, 79, equipment operator B, Hillsville Residency, died March 6; retired in 1987 with 25 years of service.

William M. Bryant, 82, equipment mechanic, Amherst Residency, died March 23; retired in 1984 with 21 years of service.

Garland F. Ferrell, 92, foreman, Halifax Residency, died March 14; retired in 1975 with 42 years of service.

William Arthur Goff, 71, equipment operator B, Bedford Residency, died March 25; retired in 1979 with 16 years of service.

Melvin J. Gregory, 69, equipment operator B, Dillwyn Residency, died April 19; retired in 1982 with 29 years of service.

Allie N. Hodnett, 94, foreman, Chatham Residency, died March 2; retired in 1976 with 23 years of service.

George Ben Hodge, 64, maintenance crew member, Christiansburg Residency, died Feb. 10; retired in 1997 with 27 years of service.

Arthur B. Johnson Jr., 79, engineer, Culpeper District, died April 8; retired in 1989 with 39 years of service.

Harvey D. Lee, 91, equipment operator B, Salem District, Traffic Engineering, died March 4; retired in 1976 with 17 years of service.

Norman Douglas Pressley, 77, traffic engineer, Traffic and Safety Division, died March 30; worked for the department from 1953-1972.

Louis H. Seamster, 79, equipment operator A, Halifax Residency, died March 17; retired in 1972 with 12 years of service.

James C. Shelton, 66, equipment mechanic A, Christiansburg Residency, died March 11; retired in 1992 with 16 years of service.

Jessie E. Smith, 73, equipment operator A, Dillwyn Residency, died May 6; retired in 1991 with 27 years of service.

bulletin

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